

Watervliet Shakers South Family Cow and Hay Barn,
Building #12
South of Troy Shaker Road (State Route #155),
approximately 1/4 mile east of Sand Creek Road
Albany Vicinity (Colonie)
Albany County
New York

HABS No. NY-3245

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
145 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-3245

WATERVLIET SHAKERS SOUTH FAMILY COW AND HAY BARN,
BUILDING #12HABS
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Location: South of Troy Shaker Road (State Route #155), approximately 1/4 mile east of Sand Creek Road, Albany Vicinity (Colonie), Albany County, New York.

Present Owner: Mr. Leonard Bol, Shaker Road, Albany, New York.

Present Use: Barn.

Statement of Significance: The size and inventiveness of this structure indicates how far advanced the Shakers were in the field of architecture, and illustrates the Shaker belief in "the sacredness of labor." The following quotation is taken from Edward Deming Andrews', The People Called Shakers, pp. 114-5: "...it must not be forgotten that progress, and a way of life superior to that of the world, had, in the Shaker mind, a moral justification: 'We have a right to improve the inventions of man, so far as is useful and necessary,' Meacham [an early Shaker leader] said, 'but not to vain glory, or anything superfluous...We are not called to labor to excell, or to be like the world: but to excell them in order, union and peace, and in good works - works that are truly virtuous and useful to man, in this life.'" In the October, 1957 issue of Antiques (P. 336), D. M. C. Hopping and Gerald R. Watland wrote of the North Family barn at Mt. Lebanon; the comments are general enough, however, to be of value in studying the Watervliet South Family barn. The dominant building in each community was the barn, whether of stone or wood. Since the Shaker economy was largely agricultural, the barns were inevitably huge. That of the North Family at Mount Lebanon...was 296 feet long, fifty feet wide, and five stories high. As in several other communities, it was built into the hillside, in order to provide access for unloading at all levels. The upper floors were used for storage of hay and grain. Below, on the main grade level, the cows were kept. At one end was a tremendous manure pit, filled by a system of buckets run around on a semicircular catwalk at the main level where the cows were, and emptied at the level below. In the instances where the barn was on the level ground, this same accessibility of all floors

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was achieved by building a series of ramps. In conjunction with the great barns, wooden wings were constructed to house wagons and carts. A place for everything and everything in its place was a part of the Shaker creed."

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: Original: Watervliet Shakers South Family. Since 1939: Mr. Leonard Bol.
- B. Date of Erection: 19th century
- C. Notes on Alterations and Additions: Round silo (diameter 13'-7") was a later addition to the east side.
- D. Sources of Information: Andrews, Edward Deming. The People Called Shakers. New York, Oxford University Press, 1953.

Hopping, D. M. C., and Watland, Gerald R. "The Architecture of the Shakers," Antiques, Vol. 72, No. 4 (October 1957), 335-339.

Lassiter, William Lawrence. "A Catalog of Shaker Photographs and Measured Drawings in the Historic Collection of the New York State Education Department, Albany, New York." An unpublished catalog of Shaker material belonging to the University of the State of New York, Division of Archives and History, Albany, New York, 1960. (Mimeographed).

(See data pages for Watervliet Shakers South Family, HABS No. NY-3272, for general historical information on the South Family).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural character: One of the largest and most complex of the Shaker structures, this wooden cow and hay barn indicates the ingenuity of these people and their advanced agricultural thinking.

- 2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

- 1. Over-all dimensions: 120'-3" (north side) x 46'-4", three stories, rectangular with L-shaped cow and storage wing.

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2. Foundations: Rubble masonry.
 3. Wall construction: Frame covered with vertical boards and vertical batten strips.
 4. Wing: Shed-like structure (wood frame construction), attached to the south side of the main barn.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Board and batten doors of varying widths and heights.
 - b. Windows: Double-hung wooden sashes, twelve-over-twelve lights. A number of wooden, projected windows of varying sizes and shapes.
 6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with slate covering.
 - b. Cornice: Plain cornice board.
 - c. Cupolas: Windowed, late covered cupola centrally located on the gable ridge.
- C. Technical Description of Interior
1. Wall and ceiling finish: Exposed construction
 2. Doors: Board and batten.
 3. Hardware: Original, wrought iron, Shaker hardware.
- D. Site: An earthen embankment and wooden ramp on the west side enables haymows and other wheeled vehicles to enter directly onto the third floor loft.

Prepared by John C. Poppeliers, Architectural Historian
National Park Service
February 1963.